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ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward and participation in politics by elementary and secondary school social studies teachers in Texas from 1976-1977 are discussed. Political involvement is interpreted to include voting, contributing time and/or money to a political party, running for political office, belonging to a teachers organization, watching news on television, and reading news magazines. The sample consisted of 243 teachers who responded to a questionnaire sent to 600 randomly selected social studies teachers. The questionnaire focused on voting records, party identification, media exposure, and political activities. Data were collected on teacher age, years of teaching, size of school district, highest degree earned, sex, courses, and grades taught. Findings indicated that there were differences according to teacher background and characteristics. For example, more females always voted Democratic, more males contributed money to political parties than females, and secondary teachers were slightly more likely to run for political office than were elementary teachers. The conclusion is that social studies teachers in Texas are more involved in politics than were teachers during the 1960s. (DB)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Title: **The Political Involvement of Social Studies Teachers in Texas**

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Citizenship education has traditionally been a part of the social studies curriculum in the elementary and secondary school. A decade ago several research projects were conducted to determine the effectiveness of citizenship education in the public schools. Hess and Torney questioned children in the elementary school and concluded that the school was the most influential agent in political socialization. However compliance with rules and authority was the main focus of civics observed by the researchers.[1] Zeigler, through his interviews with 803 secondary school teachers in Oregon, discovered that high school teachers were generally reluctant to discuss controversial issues in their classrooms.[2] Massialas in his poll conducted through the National Education Associations found that only 9 percent of the teachers polled indicated that they worked for a political party. He concluded that the majority of teachers did not see " effective participation in the political process" as a major goal in citizenship education.[3]

As a result of the above studies, curriculum writers in the last decade have made a valiant effort to improve citizenship education texts and social studies materials. These last ten years have also seen student protests, the ending of the war and Watergate. What effect has all of the political upheavals and curriculum changes from 1967-1977 had on the social studies teachers in the elementary and secondary schools? Have social studies teachers become more active politically and thus influenced their students' involvement? The following study was conducted to determine the political involvement of the social studies teachers in the elementary and secondary schools in the state of Texas in 1976-77.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if Texas social studies teachers, who were surveyed during the 1976-77 school year were involved in political activities and if so, what factors influenced this involvement.

Summary of procedures

A questionnaire validated by teachers enrolled at North Texas State University was used on a random selection of three hundred elementary social studies teachers and three hundred secondary teachers. The listing from which the random sample was taken was supplied by Texas Education Agency. Percentages from frequency distributions were used to report the findings of the questionnaire.

Summary of Results

Demographic Data

Of the 243 social studies teachers who responded to the questionnaire 60% were female and 58% taught in the elementary school. (Chart 1) Among elementary teachers 88% were female, while in secondary 70% were male. (Chart 2)

Elementary teachers ranged in age from 19 to retirement age with 79% being in the 26 to 54 age range (Chart 1). There were no secondary teachers under 26 years of age and only a few over 55(5%). The majority of secondary teachers (58%) were between 26-35.

The majority (79%) of the social studies teachers had between 4 and 25 years teaching experience (Chart 1). Most secondary teachers (62%) had between 4 and 10 years experience. Over half of the teachers (61%) were employed in large (AAAA) school districts.

Male teachers and secondary teachers were better educated than female and elementary teachers. Of all teachers who had master's degrees(41%), 45% were

male and 44% were secondary teachers. None of the teachers had a degree beyond the masters level. (Chart 1)

The social studies teachers described their present teaching assignment as the following: K-6, 61%; 7-8, 11%; 9-12, 27%. All teachers said that they taught Texas History. Other areas that were taught by a majority of the teachers were economics (95%), geography (90%), civics (89%), American government (70%), American History (64%), and world history (54%). (Chart 3)

Voting Record

The social studies teachers were not tied to political parties, since 42% often crossed party lines, 31% usually voted Democratic and 12% usually voted Republican (Chart 5). There were a few more females who always voted Democratic (12%) as compared to males (5%) being totally loyal to the Democrats. Otherwise the voting records of elementary and secondary and male and female were similar.

Political Activities

Only 32% contributed money to a political party with twice as many Democrats as Republicans giving money. More males (42%) contributed money than females(26%). Secondary teachers (33%) contributed more money to a political party than elementary teachers (23%). Less than one half (46%) of the teachers contributed $1 on the tax return, however, 52% of the males contributed on the tax return.

Of the 33% who contributed time to a party three-fourths were Republicans. Only 20% contributed time to a national party, while 23% gave time to a state party candidate and 22% to a local candidate.

Only a few (13%) considered themselves political activists with more males (16%) and secondary (15%) seeing themselves as activists. Only 2% had run or been elected to political office, most of these being secondary females. Although 87% of all social studies teachers belonged to a teachers' organization,

(88% of males, 89% of elementary), 31% had held an office in the organization. Only 8% had found conflict between their politics and job.

Media Exposure

The national news was watched on television nightly by 57% of the social studies teachers, while 73% watched the local news each day. News programs, such as "Sixty Minutes," were watched by 50% on a weekly basis and 45% read a weekly news magazine, such as Time. All three presidential debates were watched by 41%, while 98% saw at least one debate. (Chart 7)

Nearly all teachers (90%) were confident that they had a chance to to express themselves in government but over half felt that business ran the federal and state government. They believed that community government was run by business (47%) and business and people (47%).

Summary and Conclusions

In this study there were more elementary than secondary teachers simply because more elementary teachers returned questionnaires. There were fewer male than female teachers with most of the males teaching in high school. The men and the secondary teachers were better educated than the women and elementary teachers.

Males had better voting records than females. Teachers were likely to vote in national elections but less likely to vote when the election was closer to home.

Male and secondary teachers considered themselves more politically active than female and elementary teachers. Of the teachers polled 33% contributed time or money to their party as compared to 9% in the Massialas study. Only a few called themselves "activists" probably because of the negative connotation of the team. Most of the teachers belonged to teachers' organizations.

More teachers watched local news more often than national news probably because of a late night local broadcast. Only about half watch news programs or read news magazines regularly.

Has the new social studies curriculum and the political climate of the last ten years affected the social studies teachers political involvement? Something has. Teachers are showing a slight upward trend in voting records. In 1964 only 89% of teachers voted in the presidential election as compared to 94% in 1976. More teachers are contributing time and money to their party. More teachers belong to teachers' organizations. Male teachers, who are more politically active are entering the teaching profession and will probably continue influencing the whole profession. There is no doubt that social studies teachers as a whole are far from being political activists. But this study shows some progress in political involvement of teachers which will hopefully continue in the future.

References

1. Hess, R.A., and Tonney, Judith. The Development of Political Attitudes in Children. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

2. Zeigler, Harmon, The Political World of the High School Teacher. Eugene Oregon: University of Oregon, 1966.

3. Massialas, Byron G. "The Conduct of Inquiry into Controversial Socal Issues," Education and the Political System. Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley, 1969.

CHART I

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
PERCENTAGES

	Total	Male	Female	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Age					
19-25	4.53	1.04	6.80	8.18	.00
26-35	45.27	55.21	38.78	40.91	57.53
36-54	38.27	34.38	40.82	38.18	36.99
55 +	11.93	9.38	12.93	12.73	5.48
Years Teaching					
1-3	12.70	10.42	14.29	11.82	9.59
4-10	45.49	50.00	42.86	42.73	61.64
11-25	33.20	30.21	34.69	36.36	24.66
26 +	8.61	9.38	8.16	9.09	4.11
Size of School District					
B (119 or fewer)	6.78	7.29	6.12	2.73	5.48
A (120-229)	6.78	8.33	5.44	2.73	5.48
AA (230-499)	10.17	13.54	7.48	10.00	9.59
AAA (500-1099)	15.68	19.79	12.24	13.64	21.92
AAAA (1100 +)	60.59	51.04	63.27	65.45	56.16
Highest Degree Earned					
BA, BS, BSe	59.02	55.21	61.90	66.36	56.16
MA, MS, MAT MEd	40.98	44.79	38.10	33.64	43.84
EDs					
EdD, PhD					

CHART II

	Total		Elementary		Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sex	39.51	60.49	11.82	88.18	69.86	30.14

CHART III

PRESENT ASSIGNMENT
PERCENTAGE TOTAL

K - 3	29.94
4 - 6	30.57
7 - 8	10.88
9 -12	26.94
Texas History	100
American History	64
World History	54
Anthropology	3
American Government	70
Economics	95
Sociology	22
Psychology	11
Geography	90
Civics	89

CHART IV

VOTING RECORD
PERCENTAGES

	Total	Males	Females	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Voted in '76 Presidential Election	94.26	92.71	95.24	94.55	95.89
Voted in '72 Presidential Election	91.80	92.71	91.16	90.91	93.15
Voted last State Election	90.57	93.75	88.44	88.18	93.15
Voted last County Election	75.72	79.17	72.79	69.09	80.82
Voted last School Board Election	70.37	72.92	68.03	66.36	71.23
Vote regularly in State Elections	90.53	93.75	87.76	87.27	95.89
Vote regularly in County or City Elections	83.20	88.54	79.59	79.09	90.41
Vote regularly in local School Board Elections	79.84	82.29	77.55	77.27	82.19

CHART V

PARTY VOTING RECORD
PERCENTAGES

	Total	Male	Female	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Always Democrat	9.05	5.21	11.56	10.91	8.22
Always Republican	.82	1.04	.68	.91	1.37
Usually Democrat	30.86	35.42	27.89	30.00	32.88
Usually Republican	12.35	12.50	12.24	11.82	13.70
Often Cross Party Lines	42.80	41.67	42.86	41.82	41.10
Other	3.70	3.13	4.76	4.55	2.74

CHART VI

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES PERCENTAGES
ANSWERING YES

	Total	Male	Female	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Contributed money to political party (5 yrs.)	32.38	42.71	25.85	22.73	32.88
Contributed $1 on tax system	45.64	52.08	40.82	33.64	49.32
Contributed time to political party	23.14	25.00	21.77	18.18	19.18
[illegible]ider self a political [illegible]ivist	12.92	15.63	10.88	6.36	15.07
Run for public office (5 yrs.)	2.48	2.08	2.72	0	4.11
Elected to public office (5 yrs.)	1.66	1.04	2.04	0	2.74
Appointed to public office (5 yrs.)	.83	0	1.36	.91	0
Contributed money to politically active group	9.58	9.38	9.52	5.45	9.59
Member of teachers' organization	87.19	84.38	88.44	89.09	83.56
Elected to office in teachers' organization	31.12	29.17	31.97	28.18	31.51
Written letter to editor (5 yrs.)	18.26	20.83	16.33	16.36	15.07
Telephoned or written or talked to public official	60.25	62.50	56.46	52.73	60.27
Tried to persuade someone to vote	83.40	82.29	82.31	78.18	89.04

(Cont.)

	Total	Male	Female	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers
Tried to persuade someone to vote for particular issue	74.17	70.83	74.15	70.91	78.08
Experienced conflict between job security and political involvement	8.23	11.46	6.12	4.55	9.59

CHART VII

MEDIA EXPOSURE
PERCENTAGES

How often watched a regularly scheduled national newscast?	
1. Daily	57.20
2. 3-5 times per week	34.57
3. Seldom	8.23
4. Never	0
How often watched a regularly scheduled local newscast?	
1. Daily	73.25
2. 3-5 times per week	22.63
3. Seldom	3.70
4. Never	.41
How often watched a news program such as "60 Minutes," "Meet the Press," or "Washington Week in Review?"	
1. Weekly	49.59
2. Average once a month	23.55
3. Irregularly	25.21
4. Never	1.65
How often read a news/commentary related periodical such as Time or The National Observer?	
1. Weekly	45.04
2. Average once a month	20.25
3. Irregularly	31.40
4. Never	3.31
Viewed (t.v.) or listened (radio) to the "Presidential Debates" in Fall, 1976?	
1. Saw or heard all three	41.42
2. Saw or heard two	39.75
3. Saw or heard one	12.55
4. Saw or heard part of one	4.18
5. Other	2.09